

EMER H. ALDRICH.

APRIL 28, 1898.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed.

Mr. RAY, from the Committee on Invalid Pensions, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany H. R. 9801.]

The Committee on Invalid Pensions, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 9801) granting an increase of pension to Emer H. Aldrich, have examined the same and the evidence relating thereto and respectfully report:

This bill as amended proposes to increase from \$12 to \$30 per month the pension of Emer H. Aldrich, of East Pharsalia, N. Y.

Emer H. Aldrich, the claimant, enlisted August 8, 1862, in Company B, One hundred and fourteenth New York Volunteer Infantry, and was honorably discharged June 8, 1865.

He filed his application for pension under the general law January 15, 1885, alleging cold and fever resulting in disease of throat and respiratory organs. He was pensioned at \$4 per month from January 15, 1885, and was increased to \$8 from May 25, 1887; \$10 from July 3, 1889, and \$12 from June 4, 1890; and further increase was rejected March 15, 1892, October 25, 1895, and again in 1897.

The records show that the soldier contracted and was sick with ship fever on board the vessel *General Banks*, near New Orleans, and was taken from there to Brasher, and from there to New Orleans in 1863, and was treated in the University Hospital.

He recovered far enough to rejoin his regiment and perform faithful service until January 1, 1865, when he was exposed to a hard march and great exposure in a severe storm on the march from Camp Russell to Camp Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley, when he took a severe cold, resulting in cough, fever, and disease of the throat, lungs, and heart, from which he has never recovered. This disability has constantly increased. The application was legally and medically approved for disease of respiratory organs and resulting disease of heart. The evidence is abundant and conclusive that the soldier is a man of good character, correct habits, and that none of his present disabilities are the result of vicious habits.

The disease has so far progressed with the soldier that he is now substantially totally helpless. He has an incessant cough, is much emaciated, and when he attempts to stand or walk is dizzy and falls over. His exposure to the storm January 1, 1865, and resulting diseases above specified are abundantly proved by the testimony of physicians, surgeons, and comrades.

The records show that the soldier was sick with remittent fever from October 2, 1863, to December 18, 1863. The continuance of the disease to the present time is proved by the evidence of examining boards, of comrades and neighbors, and the evidence of Dr. James J. Westcott, Dr. L. D. Greenleaf, and Dr. L. P. Blair. Dr. H. H. Beecher, who treated the soldier while in the service, and who was his regimental surgeon, was a member of the examining board in 1885 and certified to his condition at that time. In 1887 the soldier was examined by a board at Oneida, N. Y. In 1889 he was examined by another board composed of different surgeons at Norwich, N. Y. In 1890 he was again examined by other surgeons composing another board at Norwich, N. Y. In 1891 he was again examined by another board composed of different surgeons at Oneida, N. Y. In 1895 he was again examined at Norwich by another board composed of different surgeons.

His condition is thus described:

Very poorly nourished; disease of respiratory organs; dullness upon percussion apex of right lung; dry rales. * * * The heart has lesion; mitral regurgitant; the spine sensitive upon percussion in cervical region, and a complaining of hurt in neck and head, with whirling; standing with closed eyes produces staggering very much; lower part of spine from tenth dorsal all below markedly sensitive; patellar reflexes markedly exaggerated; there is sclerosis of spine; is unable to walk at all with closed eyes; pupils of eyes somewhat smaller than normal.

The condition of the soldier has grown worse constantly, and the boards all certify that there is no evidence of vicious habits. Dr. L. P. Blair says:

The physical and mental condition of the said Emer H. Aldrich have steadily continued to become worse by reason of disease of spinal cord and brain until he is now wholly unable to wait on himself in any way and requires the constant attendance of a nurse night and day, and his mental condition is such that he is scarcely able to talk coherently or to make any affidavit describing his condition.

The soldier is very poor; has no property or means of support, and has a wife dependent upon him. He is now 65 years of age and can live but a short time. It is evident that his present condition is the result of malarial fever and the colds and subsequent fever near the close of his service. If it could not be doubted that the soldier's present condition is the result of disease contracted in the service he would be entitled to a pension of \$72 per month, but as there may be some doubt of this an increase to \$30 per month is fully justified, and an increase to \$50 has been given in many cases where the evidence was much less convincing than here.

The bill is reported back with the recommendation that it pass when amended as follows:

In line 8 strike out the word "fifty" and insert in lieu thereof the word "thirty."